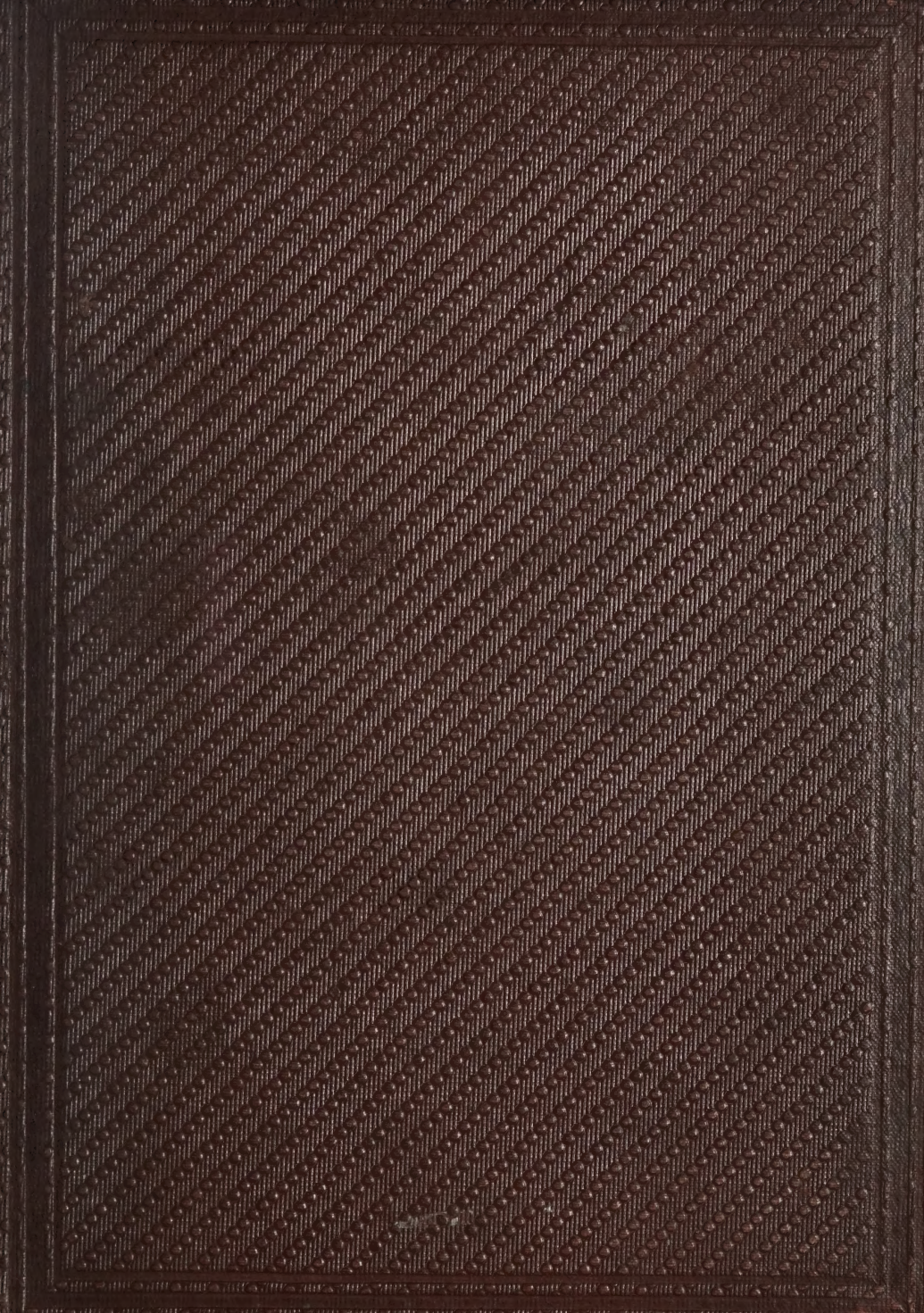




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1864.

A BUNDLE OF BALLADS.

A
BUNDLE OF BALLADS.

EDITED BY

THE AUTHOR OF "GUY LIVINGSTONE."

LONDON:

TINSLEY, BROTHERS, 18, CATHERINE ST., STRAND.

1864.

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LONDON :

TRADEBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.

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A

BUNDLE OF BALLADS.

NYMPHOLEPTES.

I REMEMBER the summer morning—
It must have been long ago,
For locks like winter's night, since then,
Are blanch'd to winter's snow—
When I went forth on Erymanth,
To the hunting of the roe.

A long vain chase ; and the winding glades
Of those upland woods are steep,
So, just where under an elm and a yew
Bright threads of water creep,
Wearied and heated, when noon was high,
I laid me down to sleep.

B

At even I woke : not quick alarm
 Made nerve and marrow thrill ;
'Twas the dead silence of the woods,
 The hush of the murm'ring rill ;
I felt there was something ghostly near,
 The air was so very still.

Then I saw, with slumberous eyes half-closed,
 Thro' the mist of rising dew,
Just where the lengthening shadows fell
 From the trunks of elm and yew,
A white hand parting the wild vines,
 And a sweet face peeping through.

As the boughs gave way, a stately form,
 In sylvan garb, stood there,
The small foot shod with dun-deer's hide,
 The lithe arms gleaming bare,
A girdle of gold round her slender waist,
 And a heron's plume in her hair.

She masqu'd it well : one only sign
Of the present Goddess told ;
You could not look in her wondrous eyes,
And deem her of earthly mould,
Ev'n when they melted or flash'd—yet less
When they shone serenely cold.

As I leapt up, with outstretch'd arms,
I saw a strange look rise,
That half allur'd, and half repell'd,
From the depths of the violet eyes,
Half womanlike, and half divine,
Half anger, and half surprise.

The glamour of her earnest gaze
Repress'd mine impulse wild,
And held me pris'ner where I stood,
Meek, as a chidden child ;
'Till thro' each vein flow'd fire again,
As the fatal vision smil'd.

The rest is darkness—in my breast
The treasur'd secret lies ;
For Eros, like his brother-gods,
Hath his own mysteries ;
Th' Initiate pays a heavy price ;
And whoso speaks them, dies.

Away ! I must not think on them,
Or my brain again will reel ;
The wild woods dare not whisper them,
The winds will not reveal ;
And on the lips that *could* have told,
She set her own sweet seal.

At dawning I woke : the wavelets spoke
In their old murm'ring tone ;
There was a rustle in the leaves,
That last night's breeze had strown ;
Or ever I rais'd my heavy eyes,
I felt myself alone.

As I sought thee thro' that weary day,
I have sought thee since—in vain ;
False love, but unforgotten ! say,
Will they never come again,
Those hours of brief, delirious joy,
Paid by these years of pain ?

I have kept troth : for thee I spurn'd
Mine own affianced bride ;
'Twas an off'ring worthy of thy shrine,
And of an Oread's pride,
When, desperate in her slighted love,
Arcadia's fairest died.

I have sought thee when the earth was gay
With garlands of her prime,
And when my matted locks were dank
With hoarfrost's clinging rime ;
But winter and spring come alike to me ;
I hold no count of time.

The forest knows our secret—
The herds of grazing deer
Gaze earnestly, but never stir,
When my heedless steps draw near ;
And I see the grey wolf and her cubs
Crouch, as I pass, in fear :

Oft, too, at dead of night, I wake,
Rous'd by an Evian cry ;
Lo, with loose tresses ivy-crowned,
And thyrsi tossing high,
The Mænad revellers hurry past,
But I neither hide nor fly.

For though no foot profane, unscathed
May cross their frantic way,
In ruth or dread those wild eyes melt
When near their haunts *I* stray ;
For they whisper that, when the fit comes on,
I am madder far than they.

It may well be so : when winds are low,
 And moon and stars ride high,
 I think—" So it was on our bridal night ;"—
 At that weird memory,
 The cliffs and glades of Erymanth
 Echo my desperate cry.

I wis these wanderings soon must end ;
 I am growing feebler now ;
 Save when I think on Her, my pulse
 Beats languidly and slow :
 If I could but worship at Her feet
 Once more, before I go !

She would hardly trace the form and face
 She once call'd very fair ;
 But there is not a furrow on Her cheek,
 Nor a silver line in Her hair ;
 The cycles of Eternity
 Will leave no shadow there.

To the woods once more—tho' the leaves be sere,
And the North-wind breatheth rain—
Perchance compassion at the last
Shall vanquish long disdain,
And love twine myrtle-wreaths for Death,
That Life but once could gain.

It is the last of many dreams ;
And yet—such things might be—
If, thro' the mists of Hades' verge,
My closing eyes should see
Th' immortal light in Hers grow dim
With tear-drops shed for me ?

Then tenfold were I overpaid,
If She hath done me wrong :
No word of murmur or reproach
Should linger on my tongue :
Not ev'n my heart should whisper,—
“Love, thou hast tarried long !”

Now listen all—to whom these words

Distemper'd ravings seem :

My days have troubled been, and dark,

Save for one dazzling gleam ;

Yet, I would not have chang'd for the Real of life,

Th' Idea of my golden dream.

THE DAUGHTER OF MYCERINUS.

HEROD. ii.

FASTEN back that heavy-folded awning,
Let me look upon the dying day ;
I shall never see another dawning,
And in Light I fain would pass away.
Let the red sun shine,
Where his glance divine
Yet may cheer mine unforsaken clay.

Raise me up, and turn my face to Northward,
Whither Nile rolls turbidly and strong :
All day long, I hear him sweeping forward,
And he seems to bear my soul along ;
Strangely leading me,
To an unknown sea,
With dim music of a murmured song.

Come thou near me, Father. "Dearest—dearest"—

Other name thou never hadst for me;

Call me so but once again; thou cheerest

This faint spirit, while I list to thee.

Let thy love again,

Mightier than all pain,

Sink into my soul invincibly.

Take my hands in thine, and clasp them to thee;

Lay thy lips to mine; nor sorrow now,

That our Gods' cold hatred doth pursue thee:

Face their thankless wrath, and fear not thou.

Not for love or prayer,

Will our tyrants spare:

Not for mystic dance or frantic vow.

I shall see thee soon again, though thickly

Comes this death-shade, sundering thee and me;

They shall send thee to thy rest full quickly,

Where our thousand sires lie gloriously.

Their God-souls despise

Love or sacrifice,

Since their murderous scourge thou wilt not be.

Thou art gentle, and their voice is, Slaughter :

They are strong to ruin, thou to save :

So they may not spare thee ; and thy daughter

Goes before thee to her maiden grave.

Yon pale shallop waits,

And the cold-eyed Fates,

Beckon silent over the dead wave.

Father ! while there yet remain that love me,

Yearly let them bring me from my rest :

Let the well-loved sunshine stream above me,

Though it wake no warmth in my cold breast.

So my soul shall be

Very near to thee,

Seeking all on earth it loved the best.

HIGH AND LOW.

A TRUE TALE OF TRAQUAIR.

LADY HELEN call'd on her foster-sister—
Said—"Come thou hither, my May :
A dead man cumpers my bower to-night,
'Tis time the corpse were away :
Foul shame it were, if they found him there,
Sith to-morrow's my wedding-day."

He lay, with blue eyes open wide,
One hand on his sword-hilt press'd,
His brows just curved in a startled frown,
A round red stain on his breast :

And, just in the midst of the sanguine spot,
Where the doublet had fallen apart,
A portrait, tied to a silky tress,
Kept its place, on the quiet heart.

“ Now lift thou the corpse’s head, my May,
And I will carry his feet ;
We will cast him in at the mouth of the linn
Where the tide and the torrent meet.”

Maid May, she stood at her mistress’ side,
And gazed in the face of the dead,
Till her cheek grew whitest of the three,
But never a word she said.

One at his head, one at his feet,
Slowly they bore him down,
To where the rush of the rising tide
’Counters the torrent brown.

Under the moonbeams met like swords
The eyes of the living two ;
Lady Helen’s lip was steady as stone,
Maid May’s was bitten through.

The moon shone full on portrait and tress,
 Lighting the features fair :
No living face, save dark-brow'd May's,
 Might match their beauty rare.

The tress was black, as mirk of nights
 When the year is past Yule-tide :
Red-brown as waning autumn's leaves,
 Were the curls of the Great Earl's bride.

“Tho' his blood is wet upon my hand,
 Thine is the deadlier sin :
But I wed at the noon, and the East is grey—
See—I curse thee not—I only pray
By the mother that nursed us both, false May,
 Help me to cast him in !”

Maid May she stagger'd as tho' she would swoon,
 But answer made she none,
Look'd up with a smile in her lady's face,
 And lifted the dead—alone.

The linn raved, foam-fleck'd, past their feet,
Lip-high in spate with rain ;
But, when it met the tide that night,
It carried out corpses twain.

Next morning, all, in bower and hall
Sought high and low for May,
Till a whisper spread—" Yestreen she fled
With a stranger across the bay "—
And all the while the bells clang'd out
For the Great Earl's wedding-day.

Lady Helen turned to her tiring-maids,
As they wound the pearls round her head,
Her eyes were glaring wild and wide,
And just these words she said—

" Ah, woe is me ! Maid May rests well ;
For the North Sea, fathoms deep,
Covers her happy marriage-bed ;—
I wonder when *I* shall sleep ! "

SIR CARADOC'S SILVER WEDDING.

WE were not wedded at high noontide,
By kith and kin surrounded ;
The chime of the Cathedral bells
For our bridal never sounded.

But at midnight, by one cresset's light,
The rites were mutter'd o'er ;
Their witness was the burly squire
Whose broad-sword kept the door.

We did not tarry for marriage-feast,
Nor even, " Adieu ! " to say ;
And scarce the benison was done,
Ere we sped on our way.

Hast thou forgot, sweet wife of mine !
 (Tho' 'tis twice ten years ago),
How happily passed those hours of flight
 While my good steed bore us on ;

Thy slight form nestling in my cloak,
 Thine arm around me twin'd,
The black night with its stars before,
 And thy father's spears behind ?

Hast thou forgot the rugged pass,
 Where, when true Roland fell,
The hunters found the hart at bay,
 At the narrowing of the dell ?

Scarce had I time, with one long kiss,
 To hush thy whisper'd fears,—
Scarce time to wind my bugle thrice,—
 When the glen grew bright with spears.

“Crouch down beneath yon crag,”—I said,
“Clear of the back-sweep of my blade ;
We’ll win it yet, be not afraid,
If so the saints should please :
They can but reach me one by one,
And we held the breach at Ascalon
Against heavier odds than these.”

Thro’ mailèd glove, I felt thy hand
Give eloquent reply :
And thou didst bide, with up-turn’d brow,
Set lips, and stedfast eye,—
So a knight’s wife should look on strife—
Shudd’ring, but silently.

There was one, six lances-length in front,
Who led the foemen on :
I knew my rival’s form right well,
Tho’ his vizor-clasp was down.

When thy stern father spurn'd my suit,
 He stood and laugh'd the while ;
But Fortune made us even, now,
For to my knee he bent him low,
 And 'twas my turn to smile.

He had vow'd, they say, to win thee back,
 Or die, ere the morrow morn ;
The notch that my sword must still retain,
Since its edge clove sheer thro' helm and brain,
 Voucheth him not forsworn.

But they press'd me hard : I scarce bore up,
 Tho' I knew that help was near ;
And when my troopers clear'd the glen,
 I never heard their cheer ;

For from side, and arm, and brow, the blood
 Pour'd fast as winter's rain :
By Mary ! three short minutes more,
 And they had charg'd in vain.

Nay, never tremble : thrice such wounds
 Would I blithely bear again,
From the languor of a death-like trance
 To wake, as I did then ;

My head upon thy breast, my cheek
 Wet with thy tender tears,
And the plaintive music of thy voice
 The first sound in mine ears.

O hardly won, and dearly lov'd !
 Tho' dark our marriage morning,
Hath not the day been calm and bright
 That broke with such wild dawning ?

ON BEN-Y-BREAC.

GAIRLOCH, ROSS-SHIRE.

It is a dreamy autumn noon,
The winds are lown and low ;
In shade or light the hills are bright
With their own golden glow.
Soft sunshine, thou hast scarce the power
To grant her brighter dress ;
O fairest in her fading hour,
The lovely Wilderness !*
But northern trumpets challenge soon—
Their snow-clouds' sweeping stride
Must whiten, like the winter moon,
The winter mountain-side.

So, sit we, where yon amber rill
Soaks on through greenest green ;

* A poor word for the Gaelic " Fášaich "—but there is no better.

For every pace, from crawl to race,
Has tried our limbs, I ween.
The stalk was long, the breeze was coy,
We've won the Death-drink here :
Once more the hunter's sullen joy—
The hard hill-forest cheer,—
The rest beside the brindled rock,
The broad view far and near,
The wandering, pondering dream of dreams,
The Dream beside the deer.

Red hide, long antler, sleepless eye,
Fleet hoofs of fire and air ;
The grouse may crow, the plover cry,
The loveliest hind may pass thee nigh,
And thou take little care :
Unmarked the swart bloodhound go by,
The thunder idly scare.
Yet short the pang, and kind the ball,
Smote thy broad shoulder thorough ;
And if my death be quick like thine,
Nor I, nor thou, need sorrow :

And may we spread out on the sward
As stout a hart to-morrow !

* * * *

The green leaves come, the red leaves fall ;
The nations rise and fail ;
Stags have their day, so have we all ;
Thus runs the weary tale.
There be two things beneath the sun
To still the heart, or move ;
So near, at times they seem like one—
Those two are—Death and Love.
So, for to-day no more of Death,
My wandering fancies roam,
And mount the west-wind's whispering breath,
Like loosed doves flying home.
Bright as yon heather-purpled knoll,
Deep as yon sunlit sea,
Again, again they seek their goal,
Where—O that I might be !
Once more, once more, Soul of my soul,
My heart flies back to thee.

FOREBODINGS.

WEST COAST OF SKYE.

GROUND-SWELL from far Labrador,
Roll onward and long ;
Great wind of the Western sea,
Fill heaven with thy song.
O false and fair, both heaven and sea,
Yet sing and sparkle on to me,
Ye frown and laugh so carelessly,
So tender and strong.

Ere the morrow's sun be risen warm,
Ye shall reel, dark and pale,
To the pipe of the singing storm
That comes without fail.

Yet, yet ye smile and say—
“We laugh and leap to-day,
Canst not thou too cast away
Thoughts of the gale?”

It is well—roll on merrily,
And be glad while you may;
Tho’ the far wreaths rise verily
Cold purple and grey.
But the bugle of the risen blast,
And to-morrow’s cloud-rack racing past
Will be blither than the dim forecast
And boding of to-day.

THE SICK STALKER.

“O for my strength . . .

Great is my desire towards the bounding herds.”

Lament of Lord Lovat's Forester.

STAY not thou thy gentle going,
O sweet south-wind, blithely blowing,
Here, where Lowland corn is growing
 White and red, to harvest near :
Northward bear the golden weather ;
Let the honey-scented heather
 Send thee faint and sick with sweetness
 To the nostrils of the deer.

Could I stir from this long pining,
Could I tread the green slopes shining,
Where each snake-like stream comes twining
 Down the hill-side, topaz-clear :

O that I were, ev'n now, crawling
Up the trickling tiny falling
Of the coldest burn that ever
Drench'd the flanks of man or deer.

Ah, dear Love, thou sighest lowly,
Sharply sets thy still face holy,
And I hear thy tears fall slowly—
Up heart, Darling, be of cheer :—
Canst not? No—that look's replying ;
So they have told thee, I am dying—
One more homeward-bounden hunter
Passing from the dream of deer ;

Since this bayonet-thrust bleeds newly,
Yon poor Tartar push'd home truly ;
Well—his shako hangs there, duly
To the chin-strap cloven clear :
Haply, after much blood-letting,
Slayers and slain meet all-forgetting ;
Since not once in spite or hatred
Smote I man, or slew I deer.

Like the keen hound dumbly straining
Ever on the leash retaining ;
So my spirit, uncomplaining,

Needs must dwell, and pass from here :

Darling, be thou for this present,

‘ Loving hind, and roe most pleasant ; ’

Let my soul pass with thanksgiving

While I hold thy hand, my Dear.

MY RELIQUAIRE.

You see that casket, wrought in gold,
With fretwork quaint and fair?
My grandsire brought from the wars in Spain
Three wounds, and—that reliquaire.

The riches were reft from the charnel-house
That it boasted in days of eld,
And princes, perchance, may have bent the knee,
Adoring the bones it held.

But *I* have found a lighter use
For the locks of my fairy shrine;
They guard the reliques of buried loves,
Of hearts that I dreamt were mine;

And I would not change those treasures
For every canoniz'd bone
Of the maiden myriad, who line
Saint Ursula's church in Cologne.

Unhasp the locks : like elves set free,
Flit out old memories ;
A strange glow gathers round my heart ;
Strange moisture dims mine eyes ;

My pulse beats quick, as when it swell'd
And sank with hopes and fears ;
Thought treads again the fairy-rings
Green in the waste of years.

Yet shifts my mood from gay to grave,
As slowly I recall,
How much is changed, since the May-days
When we were masquers all.

That white glove held a whiter hand,
When hand and heart were free ;
There's a ring on the slender finger now
That was never put on by me.

I remember *who* gather'd and gave that rose,
At the break of a summer morn ;
From her life and her flower the blossom hath dropt,
There's little left but the thorn.

That turquoise clasp—well—once for me
Earth held no richer prize ;
And, ten years since, I quite forgot
The colour of her eyes.

Yes ! all these tokens emblem well
The vows, soon made and broken,
When the morrow brought forgetfulness
Of all last night had spoken :

I have a relique dearer far,
A treasure far more rare,
Nay—you must not seek it in the heap
Of trifles mingling there;—
It could tell the story of my life,
This tress of gold-brown hair.

For long, long years it hath not left
The shelter of my breast,
It will lie there, beneath the shroud,
When mine hour shall come for rest :

It was never begged with flatt'ring words,
Nor, with feigned coyness, given;
But shorn from the confined head of One,
Ev'n then a saint in Heaven :

In the early spring-tide of our bliss,
(For she had scarcely known
One half how fondly she was loved,)
God's hand took back His own.

My lips to plead each fancy's cause,
Before, were all too prone ;
But since—for suit or for caress
They are mute and cold as stone.

For ev'n if I *could* woo again,
Think you that I could dare,
While at matins and at even-song
I turn towards Heaven in prayer,
To bring a cloud on the radiant brow
Of the gentlest angel there ?

I wander on—but all unscathed
By sweet smiles and soft eyes ;
The talisman upon my heart
Mocks all their witcheries ;

Glances of fire are glinted back,
Like the moon from a frozen sea ;
Fairer than all earth's loveliest,
Is my dead love to me.

A CHARADE.

WHERE words are spoken that chill warm hearts,
Like drops of freezing rain ;
Where friendships old are rent apart,
Never to knit again,
In hours remembered all too well,
Thro' after-years of pain ;
Where men fall fast as wither'd leaves ;
Where hurtling death-bolts fly ;
Where iron hoof with shivering spear
Makes fearful symphony ;
Where over the din of shot and steel
Rings out the Gathering-cry ;
Wherever wrath, or pain, or hate,
Mars God's creation fair,
In senate, mart, or battle-field,
Be sure, my *First* is there.

A sailor paced the storm-tossed deck,
With a dark and anxious brow ;
There was not a saint in Heaven to whom
He did not make his vow,
And pray them, if erst he had decked their shrines,
At his need to aid him now.
The night winds bore his prayer aloft,
And, as the dawn broke clear,
Forgot were all the tedious hours
Of danger, toil, and fear,
As, from twenty throats, the cheery shout
Of my *Second* met his ear.

They say, a thousand islands crown
The Sea-Queen's forehead fair ;
She wreaths the night of her flowing locks
With those jewels rich and rare ;
Yet, bright as her sister-gems may be,
My *Third* is the brightest there.

Yes, all the riches my *Second* can boast,
My *Third* for her dower may claim ;

Alas ! that one failing still should blot

The glories of such a name ;

Alas ! that hearts so warm in love

My *First* should so soon inflame.

“IT IS NOT GOOD THAT MAN SHOULD BE
ALONE.”

'Tis a long year, mine own true wife,
Since thy pure soul hath gone
Where saint and seraph vigil keep,
Before the Sapphire Throne.

We felt how lovely Death may be,
As we saw thee pass away :
So calmly broke the dawning
Of thine eternal day,

That the Sea of Light, beyond the stars,
On thy path its radiance shed,
And wings of angels fanned thy cheek
Long ere we thought thee dead.

Tongue may not tell, nor heart conceive,
What joys surround thee there ;
But, falls 'twixt me and Paradise
The curtain of despair.

Earth holds no pleasant sound or shape,
For man to hear or see,
But its presence brings a sharper pang,
With a memory of thee :

Softly and sadly glance the stars,
Like thy deep earnest eyes,
Each low, sweet melody brings back
The tones of thy replies ;

The fairest flowers that summer weaves
Into her crown of pride,
Recall the glory of thy cheek
Before its blossom died.

And I shrink away from friends, like foes,
To nurse my grief apart,
While the sense of loneliness still lies,
Like a dead hand, on my heart.

I remember, thou didst whisper
Of light beyond the gloom :
The night is darker than we dreamed,
And the dawn hath never come :

And thy last prayer went up to God,
For lightening of my pain :
Ah, what can sinners hope to win,
When saints so plead in vain ?

They quote a thousand texts, to teach
Submission : there is one
That answers all—"It is not good
That Man should be alone."

UNKNOWN, YET WELL-KNOWN.

BADAJOS, 1812.

“—— that desperate rifleman, who in his determination to win, thrust himself beneath the chained sword-blades, and there suffered the enemy to beat his head to pieces with the butts of their muskets.”

NAPIER'S *Peninsular War*, vol. iv.

WE left the plunder of the town while yet the east was
grey,

All in the dewy dreary dawn, we sought them where they
lay,

High-piled in that accursed breach, each as he passed away;

By night 'twas like the mouth of Hell, strown like its floor
by day:—

And who was he, and what was he?—men asked it all in
vain—

The bravest brave, the foremost fall'n, red flower of English
slain.

None told his number or his name, there where he lay
outspread,

Thrust underneath their spikes of steel, the chief of all our
dead.

We buried him proudly where he fell; we made the less of
moan,

That no man knew his shatter'd face—his mother had not
known.

We buried him in the bitter breach, even where he died in
vain—

The bravest brave, the foremost fall'n, the flower of English
slain.

And if you care for fame of men, think somewhat on his fall :
He hath no name or fame; he lies unknown beneath the
wall :

He gave his life most willingly, where willing men were all :
It may be that before his Lord, his meed shall not be small.
Man might not judge of his desert, and human praise was
vain

For him—the foremost, flower, and chief of all the English
slain.

THE MESS-SONG OF THE 7TH.

I PASSED my prime in the old war-time,
Some two-score years ago,
Then eyes were bright, and limbs were light,
That are dim and palsied now :
And the cheeriest space that thought can trace,
Thro' the windings of past years,
Is the reckless life of revel and strife
I led with the Fusileers.

Not a battle-plain in France or Spain
But saw our standards fly,
And not a name those ensigns claim
But speaks of victory :
Whoever they were, that the charge would dare,
Lancers or Cuirassiers,
Their dead could tell, if levell'd well
Was the fire of the Fusileers.

But we tamed our pride, by beauty's side,
When our weary wars were done ;
The wily moves of whispered loves,
We knew them every one :
It passed too soon, that April noon
Of smiles, and storms, and tears,
When—" All is fair, in love or war,"—
Was the word of the Fusileers.

Remember now, in the old time, how
The midnights used to pass,
When the claret ran, and never a man
Had dar'd to flinch his glass :
And fill it up, this parting cup,
With one of our ancient cheers,
While we drink—the boast of England's host—
The fighting Fusileers !

THE EVE OF CHILLIANWALLAH.

THE MAJOR'S TOAST.

STILL rally round me; comrades mine,
We will not part so soon,
Tho' the dawning brings us work to do,
And the night has passed its noon.

We've revels that last from the sunset gun
To the first réveillé-call;
But the feast that comes before the fight
Is fairly worth them all.

Not thro' the brain, but in the heart,
These brimming beakers glow,
Till each warms kindly to the friend,
And hardens to the foe.

So, for this toast a minute's law
From the waning moon we'll borrow :
Here's—A clear course, a willing horse,
And a heavy hand to-morrow !

If some, too, gentler thoughts may own,
I neither scorn nor blame :
Thro' the blithe morning of my life,
Were not my dreams the same ?

They rise—with a faint fragrance
Like that of wither'd flowers—
The memories of earnest eyes,
That have met the stars with ours :

I like a grave brow over-night ;
For I know, by that same sign,
Whose lip the gayest smile will wear,
When we form to charge in line.

Yet, fill again : regret is vain,
The time's too short for sorrow :
Here's—A clear course, a willing horse,
And a heavy hand to-morrow !

My voice has grown too harsh and loud
For the ear of lady fair ;
They match not well with ball and bower,
Deep scars and grizzled hair ;

Life's path grows lonelier ev'ry day,
For my kindred now are few ;
Old friends drop off, like autumn leaves,
And I care not to make new ;

But, thro' the sunshine and the storm,
Still faithful, to my side
She cleaveth,—whom the German sung,—
The soldier's Iron Bride.

I have pledged you to your lady-loves,
Whether widow, wife, or maid ;
You shall do me right, and drink to mine—
The blue Damascene blade.

This once fill high, and drain it dry,
And now, come joy or sorrow,
Here's—A clear course, a willing horse,
And a heavy hand to-morrow !

IVY.—EARLY.

THY shining head shall wear the wreath
Which once the wild Bacchante bore ;
Thy violet eyes shall shine beneath
Brighter than all of yore.
All things lovely have their day,
Fair and dear must pass away,
Even the Ivy must decay
With all bright heads that wore.

I know, and care not—care not thou ;
I swear, as all mine elders swore—
O Darling, I believe thee now
Lovelier than all before.

As thy locks send back the light,
Like thine ivy dark and bright;
And thy deep eyes of blue Night
Rest, rest evermore.

Thine ivy once shone glad and brave
O'er wine-wet hair and wine-flush'd brow;
Since—it hath deck'd full many a grave,
And so they call it pensive now.
Yet thy crown it well may be,
Since in sadness or in glee
None can smile or sigh like thee—
So wear thine ivy-bough.

KENNST DU DAS LAND?—LATE.

Know'st thou the land of golden morn,
All glare of sand and flame of light,
Where, all day long from rose of dawn,
The great sun rides in tameless might?
Ah me, to think of two short hours
Under sweet Feiran's tamarisk bowers—
In that fresh isle of desert sand,
Green with the green of our Old Land;
With its one tender-trickling rill,
And whispering palms woven overhead,
And granite peaks above, rose-red—
O dear lost love, if that might be,
There I would rest awhile by thee.

We knew the immemorial snow,
On silent ridge and savage horn;

The silver summits far withdrawn,
The pale rage of their torrents flow,
Their rosy peace at eve and morn,
Their frown of storm, their still noon-glow.
The palm's no lovelier than the pine,
Nor, if thy hand lay warm in mine,
Which roof'd us should we care, or know ; —
Lost love, although it may not be,
My soul walks there once more with thee.

We knew the red hills of the deer,
The glory of their purple heath,
The mirror of the breezeless mere,
The west-wind's honey-laden breath,
The sturdy hunter-craft all day ;
The crawl, the rush, the shot, the bay,
The stout hart stretch'd upon the sward ;
And thine the brightest eyes of all,
To greet us home at evening fall—
When thou wert Queen, and I was Lord—
They were glad hours by moor and glen ;
But they and thou come ne'er again.

And now thou know'st the quiet shore,

The brightness very far away ;

The nightless rest for evermore,

The Day that is not as our Day.

Where faith is sight, and doubt is o'er,

And pain a Nothing of the past ;

Where God shall heal that life-long sore,

Which I bear dumbly to the last.

He shall wipe tears from every eye—

So in His mercy He hath said—

Nor shall He cure less pityingly,

The grief that hath no tears to shed.

And I shall look again on thee ;

Amen, lost love. So let it be.

THE LOVER'S LEAP.

Quid Fœmina Possit.

WELL—tho' I love not boasting,
Sith all will have it so,
You shall hear how we left the field behind,
A score of years ago :

Time will unclasp his fetters,
And age grow young once more,
When we think of all that was dared and done,
In the mad days of yore.

But, first, fill up another cup,
Till o'er the mantled brim,
Sweet as the dew of a red ripe lip,
The glitt'ring bubbles swim ;

"To the loving and the lov'd,"—we'll drink,—

"The frank, the kind, the bold ;

To all warm living hearts, and those

That never till death were cold."

'Twas a dull November morning,

South wind, and cloudy sky,

When, if scent were ever certain,

A fox was doom'd to die ;

We met at Bolton Thicket,

That never blank was drawn ;

Fresh lies the scene before me now,

As it were but yester-morn—

Ten acres of copse, on a gentle slope,

By a belt of gorse surrounded ;

All grass, as far as the eye could reach,

By the low, blue hill-line bounded.

That day, my mount was Thunderbolt,

Of black Prunella's breed,

Who, thro' toil and peril, never yet
Had fail'd me at my need ;
With strength for the deep, and wind for the down,
With a racing turn of speed.

Ere long a challenge and a cheer
Came floating down the wind,
'Twas Mermaid's note, and the huntsman's voice,
We knew it was a find ;
The dull air woke, as from a trance,
As sixty hounds joined chorus ;
And away we went, with a stout dog-fox
Not a furlong's length before us.

A quiver shot thro' my strong horse
From his hoof to his swelling crest,
As a stout ship thrusts the waves aside,
Thro' the meaner crowd he prest,
Till he took the place that was his by right,
And we settled down in the foremost flight,
To hold our own with the best.

The sight of a hound, or the sound of a horn,
 Warms my old blood—even now,
And *this* was when the tide of youth
 Ran foaming at its flow ;
No trifle, in those merry days,
 Turn'd me and my peers, I trow !

Yet a shudder, such as cowards feel,
 Thro' my very marrow crept,
When I saw a fence that cross'd our line,
 As down the hill we swept ;

And well the firmest cheek might blanch,
 The sternest courage fail,
At the bullfinch, with its yawning drain,
A deep drop into a stony lane,
 And a four-foot oaken rail.

Each look'd on each, till thus spoke out
 The Nestor of our band,
A veteran of war and chase,
 Who rode at my right-hand.

“The churl who yonder ‘man-trap’ laid,
By an ill death may he fall !—
If the fox has headed across the road,
The hounds will leave us all ;
For a tougher brush it were, to face
Yon blackthorn’s venom’d spears,
Than ever we had, in the olden time,
With Kellermann’s cuirassiers.”

In the pasture, just below us,
A knot of gazers stood,
Whose eyes had never left us
Since we broke from Bolton Wood.
The best blood of two counties
Made up that bright array ;
And there the Queen of all our hearts
Sate on her fiery grey.

Hither and thither rode the field,
Seeking an easier place ;
I, too, had turned me, when I met
My Mistress face to face :

I bounded in my seat, like one
Death-stricken thro' the brain,—
Sweet wife ! the bliss of after years
Scarce paid that instant's pain.

There was scorn upon her curling lip,
In her dark eyes angry flame,
On the marble of her polish'd brow
Red rose the flush of shame ;

The veriest dastard had grown brave
There—face to face with her :
I bit my lip through, as I wheel'd,
And drove home either spur.

Sprang to the steel old Thunderbolt,
And snorted savagely ;
The blood-gouts dripp'd from his dusky sides,
Like rain from a low'ring sky :
I felt, as I rush'd him at the fence,
He was as wild as I.

Then came—too late—a warning shriek,
And, then, such crackling sound
As echoes thro' a burning house,
When beams are splint'ring round ;

But, o'er crash and cry, rose clear and high,
The voice well loved and known,
Though not a silver note was strain'd—
“O, Charlie, bravely done !”

Of six score men, there was but one
To follow where I led ;
Good faith ! his daring cost him dear ;
For, as I turn'd my head,
He was writhing 'neath his mare, who lay,
With a broken neck, stone dead.

No time to pause : for, over the meads,
We swept, with a scent breast-high :
Six more good miles we carried it on,
The brave bitch-pack, and I :

And, when we turn'd him up, my cheer,
 Borne on the rising wind,
Came faintly to the nearest ear,
 A long half-league behind.

'Twas a cold November evening,
 And the homeward way was dreary ;
For a score of miles before us lay,
 And man and horse were weary ;

But my heart was warm, as I thought of the smile
 That my return would greet,
When *she* heard the story of the day,
 With its trophy at her feet.

A RUN WITH THE QUORN,

IN THE DAYS OF "THE SQUIRE."

NEAR Kirby Gate the gorse we drew :
That a travelling fox was there, we knew,
For 'twas own'd by a sportsman, staunch and true
As ever went out in the morning.

The Squire was there on his choicest steed,
The boast of the county for bone and breed ;
Jack Stevens rode his wiry weed,
To the cover betimes in the morning.

Her tongue we heard old Prioress throw,
And she never yet spoke false, you know ;
Frank Holyoake view'd the varmint go,—
" Tally-ho there, away ! " in the morning.

Straight over the pasture-grounds they sail ;
But the fences run large in the Leicestershire Vale,
And there's bellows to mend, and a lengthening tail,
Tho' it's early yet in the morning.

Scant and select the field has grown ;
At the last ox-fence a dozen are down ;
But the Earl and the Squire still hold their own,
And give 'em a lead in the morning.

The Whissendine Brook ran deep and wide,
But the foremost-flight never turn'd aside ;
And six took it fairly in their stride,
With a "For'rard away !" in the morning.

Two hundred started fair, and more,
But they all tailed off ere the run was o'er ;
And, to see him die, there were but four,
Of all who met in the morning.

The Squire was one ; and I've heard it said,
That the tree-tops shook upon Woolwell Head
When his cheer, that told how the fox was dead,
Woke the echoes up in the morning.

O'er ten good miles the chase had past ;
You may judge yourselves if the pace was fast :
'Twas fifty minutes, from first to last,
When they turn'd him up in the morning.

When the Quorn next meet at Kirby Gate,
Unless you can go when hounds run straight,
You may take my word, for the death you'll be late,
Tho' you start with the first in the morning.

A LEGEND OF GALWAY.

FROM the gorse of Ahaseragh the hounds broke away,
With the "grey fox" on foot, and a warm scenting-day,
The cracks of Roscommon are here, and they swear,
Come life or come death, to beat Valentine Maher.

He's last thro' the clay and the deep of the vale—
Not seen at the gap in the third post-and-rail,—
And, still with the lead, the Roscommons ask—"Where
Is the pride of your county, bold Valentine Maher?"

Then, smiling aside, the old huntsman spoke low—
"With the grey fox on foot, we've a day's work to do;
You'll have nerves of the strongest, nor steel must you spare,
If you ride to the finish with Valentine Maher"

All the while his hot chestnut was chafing in vain,
Till the foam from her nostrils speck'd breastplate and rein;
But cool, as at first—"Take your time, never care,
We'll catch 'em yet, Kathleen!"—said Valentine Maher.

They near'd the Black River, they heard its dull roar,
They mark'd the thick mist-wreaths that brood on its shore,
When his laugh, close behind them, rang cheery and clear—
"Here's food for the fishes!"—quoth Valentine Maher.

While they stood on the bank, and the boldest held breath
As he gazed on the torrent, three fathoms beneath—
When the best of Roscommon drew rein in despair—
With a rush to the front came Valentine Maher.

He call'd upon Kathleen,—one snort and one spring;
She clove thro' the air, like a swallow on wing;
He turn'd in his saddle,—“Now, follow who dare:
I ride for my County,”—quoth Valentine Maher.

A LEGEND OF GALWAY.

The hounds left the valley, they strain'd up the hill,
But one rider remains, and he sticks to them still ;
They check'd on the brow of Kilconnel, and there,
To turn them and cast them, was Valentine Maher.

Where the coverts of pine over Athenry frown,
Within one mile of home, the grey fox was pull'd down ;
And rock, hill, and valley sent back the death-cheer,
As they rang to the halloo of Valentine Maher.

So we'll drink with nine cheers to the old County's breed ;
To the blood in the veins of both rider and steed ;
And here's—"The next time that Roscommon shall dare
Go straight across Galway with Valentine Maher !"

ALLAH AKHBAR.

THE SHEYKH'S TALE.

“As often as he (Ali) smote a rebel, he shouted the Allah Akhbar—
‘God is victorious!’—and in the tumult of a nocturnal battle, he was
heard to repeat it four hundred times.”—*Gibbon*, c. 50.

FULL late the sharp alarm was cried—
Our waning camp-fires gave no spark ;
The midnight grew so deadly dark
Men pray'd for light on either side—
We dared not let one arrow glide ;
We caught our steeds, and sprang to selle ;
We dealt on them with spear and mace,
And whom we smote we could not tell ;
Nor see the struggling foeman's face.
The Caliph had a score to ten,
And right among our tents they rode ;
But all the tug of strife abode
Where Ali's broad blade rose and fell.

As a brother greets a brother,
 As the dry ground meets the rain,*
 Willing, not to part again,
 So we rush'd upon each other.
 Hard heads crack'd, and high blood ran,
 Down went many a mailèd man ;
 All lips foam'd, and all hearts madden'd,
 Hawk and wolf drew near and gladden'd—
 But still Ali's strong hand swung
 All thro' hours of swaying fight
 Still the Loved-one's voice low thunder'd ;
 All night long, and times four hundred,
 Grave, like Death and Fate, it rung
 With the words he never said
 But he fell'd his foeman dead :—
 “ God is great, and giveth might ! ”
 So he smote without a frown,
 So, untouch'd, he hew'd them down.

* * * * *

I am Salâm, son of Seir,
 High Sheykh of the stout Rowalla : †

* The Songs of Antar.

† South division of the great Anazeh tribe.

All my raven beard and hair
Have grown silvery since that day ;
And I've lived in chase and fray
Threescore years and ten ; Mashallah !
And, good youths, this is my rede :
All thro' life, and all thro' strife,
In your power, or in your need—
Do your best as we did then ;
We—great Ali's hard-press'd men ;
Lay on stoutly while ye may,
Tho' thick darkness close ye round,
Smite and fear not, strive and pray ;
Darkling, ye shall hear the sound
Of your Master's great voice, tolling
Over waves of combat rolling—
“ Allah Akhbar, God gives Might.”
Lo, ye know your own defender,
Mightiest hand, and heart most tender :
All unseen, in van of fight,
He shall cleave you out your way.

IN EREMO.

A FRAGMENT.

THE red sand sent the morning's fire
Right in our faces, ray for ray ;
The mirage vex'd me with desire
Of water, many a mile away :—
I shook my rein, and click'd my tongue,
And canter'd on a little while ;
Nor waited that grim Sheykh for long,
But raised his brown hand with a smile,
And press'd his calf and spurless heel
Like fire against his stallion's side ;
Nor whipcord-cut nor stroke of steel
Could more have stirr'd his pride.
Without the mighty English stride,
But with a sharp and noiseless bound,
And stag-like hoofs, scarce marking ground,
He did devour the way.

The dark-grey mare had little care,
Nor I, to stay a length behind ;
She switch'd her saucy tail in air,
And gave her small hoofs to the wind,
And snorting stretch'd away.
The glittering sand it shower'd behind,
The ring'd horizon fled before,
And light up-sprung the desert-wind,
And kiss'd our faces o'er and o'er,
As if the light and careless speed
That swept us over sand and stone
Show'd we were something of his breed,
And children of his own.
Ah me ! that weight must tell on speed,—
The light Sheykh took and kept the lead,
It may not be denied—
Tho' the grey mare ran stout and true
As e'er went chestnut Canezou
By mighty Surplice' straining side.
'Twas nothing but a rattling ride !
Yet—I thank God—awhile it stole
A dead weight from a weary soul.

* * * * *

Full fast we rode by the Dead Sea shore ;
 You had scarcely heard the light hoofs fall
On its steaming shingle and salt sand hoar,
 Where the gentle grey set her pastern small.
Side by side, with an even stride,
 So the horses went away :
And the riders turn'd in their seats and eyed
 Each other's faces and array.
He gazed, with a kindly pride
 Glancing from each haughty feature :
Nor am I wont to turn aside
 Mine own sad looks from any creature ;
So, half-pleased and willingly,
I look'd at him, and he at me.

* * * * *

He was small and light of limb,
 Red-haired as the Duke of Edom ;
Sun and frost had wasted him,
Till his falcon face look'd grim ;
 And untamed his eye of freedom.
Saracen black, with a raw-silk sleeve—

Careless pride in every fold—
Such as wives in Baghdad weave,
Stream'd behind his mash'lah old ;
His Wahab hood was scarlet and gold.
His saddle was worn, but his horse was gay,
His hilt was crack'd, but his blade was keen ;
Wild, wild was his whole array,
All unwash'd was his carcase lean :
Chain or jewel bore he none,
Save one broad quaint turquoise ring ;
White with dust, and black with sun,
So he bore him like a king.
His sceptre and throne were spear and selle,—
I wot the two became him well.

PASS OF THE MARCADAOU,

HIGH PYRENEES.

A HOT MARCH.

THERE blows a paler heather here,
With broader streaks of last year's snow,
Than where our hearts first drew so near
Down yonder deep Glencoe.
It's many a day since Scottish hill
Beneath thy stag-like steps hath been ;
And we are far asunder still,
A thousand miles between.

I think, I see not on the hill
The glory that I once could see ;
I wander on with nerveless will
Aye longing sore for thee.

The hot wind swelters sickly slow
 With all the southern fires of Spain ;
I scarcely feel—I only know
 My heart turns home again.

The sun rides king-like, and defies
 Our march with flaming face austere ;
The savage mule grins with white eyes,
 And swears the stark-limb'd muleteer.
The minstrel grasshopper, he sings,
 Gay revelling in the fiery shine,
And greets this broad smile of his king's,
 As I might look to thine.

He toils not ; we drag on forlorn,
 Whose dogged march wears out the day :
It may be that he laughs to scorn
 Our mightier, wearier clay.
I think, and thought, in spite of rod,
 School fable treated him but ill :
He lives, and sings, and praises God,
 And dies but as He will.

A fainter heat, a sicklier ray—

The long fierce hours are wearing by,
And soon the dying breath of day

Up this long glen shall sigh.

But still the hillside reels with heat,

And gneiss and granite bask and glow,
And still our thirst and sun-dried sweat
Seem mock'd with distant snow.

The shade climbs up the flay'd hillside,

And wraps us in its gentle fold ;

The tossing peaks put on their pride

Of rose and burning gold.

We've tasted every stream we've past,

And last and sweetest cometh this :

The wind, that seem'd a furnace-blast,

Comes tender as thy kiss.

Thy presence hath the rest of Night ;

Thy broad eyes have her starry calm,
So dark and light, so deep and bright ;

Thy breath is like Eve's balm :

Like the soft welling of this rill
 Sounds evermore thy tender tone ;
And as the thirst on Spanish hill
 My love for thee, mine Own !

LAUTERBRUNNEN.



“The mountain gloom.”

THE red clouds fly wheeling
In rank and in choir,
Like circles of angels
All forms of clear fire.
The low breeze comes faintly
All up this long glen ;
So sounds to the angels
The sighing of men.

O breeze moving slowly
So sad, though so free ;
As thou sighest lowly
So I sigh with thee.

O, art thou weary
Because thou art bound
To wander unresting
The wide world around ?

Is it, thou art homeless,
As lone as grey Fate,
While of all things else earthly
Each one seeks his mate ?
And doth it torment thee
To pass on thy way,
And see Love's awakening
At sweet set of day ?

Or doth thy soul sicken
Because of the Pain
Thou hast seen under heaven,
And shalt see again ?
For fever and hunger
In many a fair scene,
For sties of foul cities
Thou canst not make clean ?

For the snow-wreaths, down rushing
 Beneath thy soft breath ;
For the grind of the glacier
 Blue-white, like grim death ;
Which onward and onward
 Ploughs fatefully past
Like the mills of God, grinding
 To powder at last ?

For breath of all sorrow
 That loads thy light wings ;
For wasting and fading
 Of all lovely things ?
For hope, and long waiting,
 For joy—God knows when,
For sadness and madness,
 And sighing of men ?

“ No—mine is no sadness
 To stir the faint nerve :
I am but a servant,
 Delighting to serve :

'Tis thy heart is sickly ;
Thine own sullen blood
Feels the dulness and chill
Of the black Northern mood.

“ True—fair things pass fleeting
And joy cometh slow,
When—God knoweth only—
But still, He doth know.
She is His, and is with Him,
And never can fade ;
And thy sorrow 's, like thee,
But shade of a shade.

“ How or when of His purpose
Concerneth not thee ;
Though not in man's order
It is and shall be.
Wait His time, wait on Him,
Be still until Then,
And take thy part gravely
In sighing of men.”

AT BÂLE, 1856.

Good town of Bâle, thy gables shine
Red in the Western fire ;
There is a crimson stain on Rhine
Below the double spire.
Across from Jura comes the wind,
All carelessly and gay,
Unlike the gentle dying breath
Of this fair day.
But speed, speed, river,
So strongly as you roll ;
And follow westward ever,
Strong hope of all my soul.

Go on for aye, by sun and moon,
Gay youth of Father Rhine !

Not all the blaze of deep midnoon
Can touch that stream of thine !
His rays but fill thee fiercer still,
Thro' the long summer day ;
But sweat the grim grey-banded ice
For thee alway.
And as thy streams, young river,
Warm while they westward roll,
So kindling on for ever
Runs the hope of all my soul.

What dost thou mind the struggle past
That proved thy newborn might ;
The granite dens that bound thee fast
And hid thine own snow-light ?
The pits of gneiss that held thee down
All thro' the Evil Way,
How, roaring mad with victory,
Thy flood leapt into day ?
How thou didst cleave the granite gorge,
And whirl its ruins down,

As Samson bore the upturn gates
Off from the traitor town?
How thou hast slowly suck'd and sapp'd
The foot-gripe of the pine,
Until his wiry sinews snapp'd,
And down he thunder'd—Thine?
Or dost thou chafe to think, thy course,
That runs so fair and fast,
Must wind away with tamer force
Thro' dykes and fens at last?
Yet, glad or mournful, onward roll,
And bear my heart with thee:
The hope and hunger of my soul
Shall stride the narrow sea,
And find the dearest and the best
Where'er her steps may be.

ST. CATHARINE'S HILL, ROUEN.

Rest on this chalk-hill's shaven sward,
Like some old English down,
And hear its murmur rise abroad
The fair old filthy town.
Above its stirring, chattering swarm,
Against the Western fire,
Upsoars for aye one giant form,
The gaunt Cathedral spire.
Close by are lovelier sister-towers :
St. Ouen reigns hard by ;
The fair Seine winds rejoicing on,
Into the evening sky :
And yet that iron skeleton,
Hath power upon the eye.

Look yet, before the sun be down,
Before the red light fade,
How all across the humming town,
He throws his belt of shade.
The people fret about him still—
Kind light, soft shade, beneath—
As their vain heart and thankless will
Frets 'neath the ancient Faith.
Men tell us they grow wiser now ;
Sadder, no doubt, they may—
But that which bow'd the soul of Rou,
May well bend theirs to-day.

Down goes the sun in all his strength,
With never a stain of cloud ;
The bells of eve speak out at length,
More awful-deep than loud :
Not all the city's smoke and stench,
Can dull that flaming round ;
Not all its noise of fretful French,
Keep out that lordly sound.

Great viewless blaze of formless light—

Great voice that saith no word—

They strike the soul without the sense,

Felt, though unseen, unheard.

Time speaketh—hear him as thou wilt

And see—if thou wilt see,

The smoke of toil and suffering, guilt

By glory that shall be.

THE WINDS' SONG.

(TO A NURSERY TUNE.)

HEAR the South-wind's murmur sweet—
“Forth from crowded court and street :
Flowers enow to hide your feet
I bring with me.”

Hear the East-wind whistle shrill—
“Snow-wreaths for moor and hill,
Chains for river, tarn, and rill,
I bring with me.”

Hark ! the West-wind whispers low—
“Health for the fever'd brow,
Quickening for the pulse's flow
I bring with me.”

Hark! the North-wind roars aloud—

“White rack of driving cloud,

Fit to be a tall ship's shroud,

I bring with me.”

Loitering still, or hurrying on,

Silver-sweet, or hoarse in tone,

Silence keepeth never a one

When once set free.

VÆ VICTIS.

KEENLY was the mistral blowing,
'Neath its kiss her cheek was glowing
Thro' grey olives that were growing
 On the uplands near the sea ;
Strange—how clearly I remember
That sixth morning of December,
When, in insolence of beauty,
 I met haughty Cara Lee.

Soon I saw that I could tame her :
Tho' she knew my love must shame her,
Foes might scorn, or true friends blame her,
 Little cared or counted she :

While it lasted, that brief madness,
Even presage brought no sadness,
And remorse—we both defied it,
Ah, too rashly, Cara Lee !

Pain enough for worse offending,
Came at last the bitter ending ;
Rare and sullen stars were lending
Light enough her tears to see,
Thro' the closed lids welling slowly ;
But her lips were silent wholly—
Only mine own heart reproach'd me
When I last saw Cara Lee.

Every sin, if Priests speak truly,
Wrought in olden days, or newly,
A strict Judge will reckon duly,
Gathering ghosts from earth and sea :
The small voice I now keep under,
Then perchance will speak in thunder ;
What—if I meet no more mercy
Than I dealt to Cara Lee ?

A MODERN IDYLL.

“Let sleeping dogs lie.”

HORACE.

THE night is young yet, Frank, my friend,
Don't pass this empty seat :
You well have earn'd brief breathing-space,
For that last *Sirène* was fleet ;
Tho' the music scarcely went fast enough
For your partner's glancing feet.

Now own the truth—you are in love,
And raving-ripe already ;
Small blame to you, your young blood's hot,
Your brain not oversteady :
And you might look far before you met
Another such winsome lady.

FRANK.

Not so : her pride would blight my love
Before the bud could blow ;
There's no more pulse in the delicate wrist
Than if it were moulded in snow ;
No passion could breathe in those measured tones,
Tho' musical, soft, and low.

The broad bent brow looks too serene
Thro' its framework of wavy gold ;
You could not fancy those careful braids
Dishevell'd or unroll'd ;
A lovely face,—but a shade too pale ;
Grand eyes,—but a thought too cold.

HORACE.

I vow'd a vow three years ago
'Twere sin and shame to break ;
But one gets so savage now and then,
That best resolves are weak :
You did not see that insolent smile—
It warrants me to speak.

Ah, Frank, my friend, the time has been
When that snow-white, ice-cold hand,
As it thrill'd, and quiver'd, and trembled in mine
Held fire like a smouldering brand.
I could count each pulse of her restless heart,
As she nestled close to my side,
And the pale cheek glowed, like western skies,
When storms close eventide.

Her lips were eloquent enough—
For maidenhood too bold—
As their low murmurs spoke of love
That made mine own seem cold :
And yet—I have seen her eyes confess
What those lips dared never have told ;

'Tis true, they were busy enough then
In answering caresses,
Shower'd down as fast as snowflakes drive,
On whose track the north-wind presses :
You should have seen those careful braids
Flowing, loose as a Bacchanal's tresses.

And still she would haunt the favourite church
Where the fair ascetics throng :—
There, none could match my stately saint
Of the hundreds she knelt among :
If they had but guess'd how her hours were spent,
'Twixt matins and evensong !

She was mine own—mine, body and soul—
When I sail'd for Kaffirland ;
When next we met, it was her will—
When you're alone, you may laugh your fill—
That I should not kiss her hand.

She neither pities me nor fears :
'Tis true, that over her head
I hold a sword—one little word,
That would strike her fair fame dead ;
That troubles not her careless calm—
She thinks it will never be said.

So—on your arm, this very night
Smiling she pass'd me by ;

With the slightest bend of her delicate neck,
A challenge in her eye :
She chose that instant, too, to give
Your flatteries, low reply.

Does love or hate most move me now ?
Sometimes 'twere hard to say—
She were wiser not to try me so,
But I bear it as best I may :
I owe her much for memories,
That will warm till black turns grey.

Now, Frank, my friend, I like you well
For your father's sake and your own :
You are welcome to my purse and name,
As more than once I've shown.
The scar on my arm saved a worse in your chest,
When the Zulu was pinning you down :

We know how the gibe goes round at mess,
When claret clouds the brain ;

But when *one* jest is on your lips

I pray you to refrain ;

For—the day that you breathe a word of all this—

There'll be murder betwixt us twain.

HELEN'S PETS;

OR,

COLONEL MARTINET'S MEMORIES.

HER foot caress'd the Leopard's neck ;
The Antelope crouch'd by her knee,
As she whisper'd—" All fiercest and shyest things
Change their nature for love of me :
I had two such pets before to-night ;
Now—may I count them three ? ”

Her lithe white fingers, while she spoke,
Strayed over my brow and hair :
'Twere hard to count the wrinkles now
Round these temples hollow and bare ;
But cheek and curls—or women lied—
With the best might then compare.

Storm follow'd sunshine hour by hour ;
When matters went awry, .
Fair Helen's pets all suffer'd in turn :
With a prayer in her large moist eye,
Leila would lick our tyrant's hand ;
But we growl'd—the Leopard and I.

When I totter'd home from Rohilcund,
With a sabre-cut on my head,
I felt stunn'd for a minute—not surprised—
At the news that Helen had fled ;
But I shed some tears (being weak from my wound)
On the grave of the Antelope—dead.

The other two have grown gaunt and grim,
Sore changed from what we were :
Keep clear of the sweep of Selim's chain,
For his fangs are prompt to tear :
Would you know how dragoons can grumble and
curse ?—
Breathe my name in our barrack-square.

Never was woman, false or true—

Dead or alive—worth a sigh.

'Tis the weakness of the Antelope breed,

Deserted, they pine and die ;

But there's comfort in biting and growling still,

So we live—the Leopard and I.

A WISH.

FROM THE HUNGARIAN OF COUNT PETROFY, KILLED IN ACTION IN
THE SPRING OF 1849.

—♦—
IF that the Lord stood by, and said,—
 “My son, I give thee power
To choose thy time of mortal dread,
 And name thine own dark hour.”
So should it fall at autumn tide,
 In autumn blithe and brown;
Ere winds be wild, or sere leaves piled
 Before the winter’s frown,
With one belated bird to sing
 In sunshine glinting down.
And as the steps of soft decay
 Creep on the fading year;
So all unfelt and tranquilly
 Should welcome Death draw near.

I'd sing my last as clear and free
As bird on autumn spray ;
And up to Heaven my voice should flee,
And hearts on earth should echo me,
Before I pass'd away.

But when the charm hath left my lips,
And when my song is o'er,
Come thou, my Heart, the Flower of Earth,
Come, though thy soul be sore,
And shake thy tresses down like Night,
And kiss my lips once more.

But if this be too good for man,
God send my death in Spring ;
When strong men meet on either hand,
When maddening trumpets sing ;
When stabs and blows bring out the Rose,
From stout hearts blossoming,

Blow trumpets—sing like nightingales,
Make music to our mood ;

And so from out my heart of hearts
Spring up, dark Rose of Blood.
And as my right hand drops the sword,
My left forsakes the rein ;—
Come thou, O Freedom, Flower of Heaven,
Come hastening down amain ;
And press thy fiery lips to mine,
That never I speak again.



THE LEGEND OF DECIUS.

ARGUMENT.

IN the year B.C. 340, Annius of Seta, Prætor of the Latin confederacy, came to Rome to demand a perfect equality of rights between the two nations. The alternative was a rupture of the alliance then subsisting between them. This was refused; and the Latin, in his anger, not only defied the Senate, but blasphemed the Capitoline Jupiter. On leaving the Temple, he missed his footing, and, falling down the stone steps leading from the Capitol to the Forum, was killed on the spot. So said the Roman account. Upon this ensued the great Latin war. The Roman Consuls were P. Decius Mus and T. Manlius Torquatus. While the armies were encamped opposite to each other, the Consuls issued an edict that no Roman should engage single-handed with a Latin on pain of death. This was disobeyed by the son of Torquatus, who, being challenged by Mettius Geminus, attacked and slew him. When he returned to the camp, Torquatus caused him instantly to be scourged and beheaded. Soon after, a decisive battle took place at the foot of Vesuvius: when the Romans began to give way, Decius devoted himself and the hostile army (according to an ancient formula) to the Infernal Gods; then he spurred into the midst of the enemy, and was slain. The result was that great victory which established the supremacy of Rome over Middle Italy for ever.

THE COUNCIL.

IN the Curia of Velitræ
The peers of Latium met;
The lords of thirty Cities,
Each in his order set:

From township, too, and hamlet,
The grey decurions come,
And half Italia's destiny
Hangs on the question that they try,—
“Is it peace, or war, with Rome?”

The contest of the factions
Rose with the rising sun,
Fiercely it raged, and doubtfully,
When his middle course was won;
And the Lower Sea blush'd rosy red
Ere the debate was done.
Like Elean wrestlers fairly match'd,
Thro' the long summer's day,
Opposing speakers struggled
The conclave's vote to sway:
Still was it tried; for neither side
Could win one foot of way;
'Till rose above the storm of words
One voice deep-toned and clear,
With the clangour of a trumpet-call,
It smote the list'ner's ear;

While a whisper thro' the benches
Of Velitræ's Curia spread :
"Hearken to Lucius Annius,
The brother of the dead !"
They had glozed all for policy,
With state-craft calm and cold ;
But his accents, passionate and strong,
Like a flood of lava rolled along,
Soul-stirring, brief, and bold :

"Let the college of pale augurs
Babble of 'wrath above,'
How Annius perish'd by the bolt
Of Capitolian Jove ;
And let Rome's Latin hirelings
Of sign and portent tell :
Good faith ! they mouth it fairly,
And earn their wages well.
But *we* know, 'twas Roman falsehood
Our noble Prætor sped :
From the grave he calls us to avenge
His blood, so foully shed :

O ye! who follow'd him long ago,
When he led us down on the reeling foe,
Have your ears and your hearts grown deafer now
To the voice of the martyr'd dead?
'Tis a sounding boast—'Quirinus,
His own will never fail!' .
But the hoarse waves of Allia
Murmur a truer tale;
And the fresh graves are scarcely green,
In the Vestinian vale.
He saw his senate slaughter'd,
His city all a-flame,
When the Capitol could hardly save
The embers of Rome's name:
Sure, none of the immortals
Hath been more sorely tried,
Yet it wearied not the patience
Of the dread Fratricide;
A lighter insult moved him more
On the day when Remus died!
Shall we, whose sires were gods and kings,
Like herded oxen, yield

To the brood of slaves and renegades,
Without one stricken field?
We *may* o'ercome; we *can* but die,
Like men in front of fight:
So,—one bold blow for freedom,
And the Gods guard the right!"

No whisper now, but an eager shout
Thro' Velitræ's Curia spread,—
"Right well hath Lucius spoken,
For the living and the dead!"
His words have roused to daring
Faint hearts that lately quail'd,
And, echoed by the nation's voice,
The vote for war prevail'd.

* * * *

The heralds cross'd the Tiber,
As the sun was going down,
There was joy, as for a victory,
In Rome, when the news was known;
Ere midnight, o'er the Latin bounds,
The Fetial's lance was thrown.

Uprose the haughty burghers,
In their halls on Palatine,
There was bright'ning of corselets and sharp'ning of blades,
Where the hardy craftsmen ply their trades,
On the slopes of Aventine;
The ruin'd debtors heard the din,
Deep down in noisome caves;
And they who long had silent lain,
Their senses numb with shame and pain,
Leapt up in frenzy and rent at their chain,
Muttering curses they knew were vain,—
War was not made for slaves;
And, as eager footsteps went sounding by,
From the dungeons there rose a wail and a cry,
Might have waked, with its desperate misery,
The usurers in their graves.

The trumpet sounded as evening closed
On the fiery Nones of June,
And, ever since, thro' the city's round,
There hath been a ceaseless, busy sound,
Like distant murmurs of sullen seas,

Or restless hum of labouring bees,
At the sultry hour of noon ;
But, chiefest in the Forum,
Was the tumult and the din,
Where, still to swell the levies,
Fresh names came pouring in ;
And, ere the third day's dawning,
As the stars began to fade,
On the plain, beyond the Capene Gate,
Six legions stood array'd.

The Samnites, five times vanquished,
And yet half unsubdued,
Now, at their conquerors' utmost need,
Forget the ancient feud ;
From many a rock-built eyrie
Pentrian and Daunian come,
The hardy mountain-dwellers,
To lend their swords to Rome.
No foreign hirelings are they,
Whom She must now oppose ;
Nor, elsewhere, 'tween the Double Seas,

Are found such worthy foes :
And She, who brooks no rival,
Nor partner of her throne,
Hath a sharp struggle yet to win,
Or ever she reign alone.
They come not from the Volscian,
False friend and restless thrall ;
Nor from snow-laden forests
Of bleak Transalpine Gaul ;
Nor whence the Umbrian Mountain
O'er Trasimenus lowers ;
Nor whence Tarentum, o'er the tide,
Casts broken shadows far and wide,
From a coronal of towers ;
But warring hosts and rival Gods
Must try, on the battle-day,
If the Seven Hills or Latium
A subject world shall sway ;
And many a soul, from its shatter'd home,
To Stygian shores shall fleet :
For, 'tis a strife for death and life,
When the Sister-nations meet.

THE BATTLE.

THE cloudy racks drift slowly back
From the Calabrian Hill,
The morn of battle rises
Heavy with mist, and chill,
As if her brows were clouded
With prescience of ill.
There's stir within the Roman camp ;
For a full hour ago,
From tuba and from lituus
The wakening-call was blown.
Near the Prætorium's threshold
Gather the Augurs' band,
Where, by two turfen altars,
Tribunes and Consuls stand.
Alone, amidst the shrinking crowd,
Torquatus holds his place ;
Th' Erinnyes, busy in his breast,
Leaves little outward trace
On the features, passionless as steel,
Of the son-slayer's face.

The shades have deepen'd on his cheek ;

But he bears him haughtily,

As when he spoke the ruthless word

That gave his first-born to the sword,

And sat to see him die.

Eyes only, in which never sleeps

The red and wolfish glare,

Speak of the heart too strong to break,

That lives, upon its kind to wreak

The venom of despair.

The scent of slaughter cheers him now,

And the savage blood mounts to his brow,

As he hears the Augurs say :—

“ With trustful heart, Torquatus,

Go forth unto the fray ;

The Fates grant half our Founder's prayer,

Thou shalt o'ercome to-day.”

Meanwhile, on Decius' altar,

Girt by an eager throng,

From quivering entrails, soothsayers try
To draw the rede of destiny,
 Good sooth ! they tarry long.
It came, and every listener's pulse
 Stood still in prescient fear,
While, with wild eyes and 'bated breath,
 He paused, intent to hear,
What hath blanched ashen-white the lips
 Of the grey Etruscan seer :—

“There is wrath among the nether Gods ;
 Hell yawneth for her prey ;
If our Left wing prevail in strife,
'Twill purchase, with its leader's life,
 The victory to-day.”

At the fatal word, a shuddering groan
 Broke forth from all the crowd ;
The veterans, comrades of his wars,
Smote on their bosoms, seam'd with scars,
 And wept and wail'd aloud.

The Consul hush'd them with his hand,
As he stood before them all,
The only man of that mighty host,
Tho' the evil presage touch'd him most,
Whom it could not appal :
The colour changed not on his cheek,
Nor shook his steady tone,
While through the ranks, at his earliest word,
There was silence, so deep that you might have heard
The matin-song of the neighbouring bird,
Or the west wind's breath, tho' it scarcely stirr'd
Dead leaves that last night it had strown.
And on his lip, like sunlight,
The smile began to play,
That those who knew it said, of yore,
In the hour of triumph, it ever wore,
When the toil of doubtful fight was o'er,
And he felt he had won the day.

“What mean these murmurs? shall we pause
When the will of Heaven is clear?”

Ye must quench its wrath with a richer draught
Than the blood of ram or steer ;
Brief will the rites be, for, I ween,
The sacrificers' blades are keen,
And the victim's ready here.
Where my white porch crowns the Aventine,
My sweet wife bides alone,
And loud and long Volumnia prays
For her last living son :
'Twill be lonely round that happy hearth,
I fear, when I am gone.
But Rome ! nor wife, nor mother,
Are half so dear as thou ;
And by the battles, whose brunt we've borne,
By the Sacramental oath we've sworn,
I will not fail thee now.
So, if thy Right wing fail thee,
And falter in the fray,
Bear bravely up, Torquatus !
I'll aid thee, as I may ;
But if, before the Latin,
The Left one foot should flee,

Heaven help Cornelia ! for, that hour,

A widow'd wife is she.

I shall fall—but as my father fell—

As I pray my son may die—

For the City's weal, and the fair fame

Of the Publian Decii."

The sweet smile faded from his face,

As it darken'd to a frown,

For, just where the hill-range join'd the plain,

With a heave in their ranks, like a stormy main,

Standard and spear-head glistening bright,

Where their points caught gleams of the freshening light,

The Latin host came down.

And the long swell of the litui,

Thro' the morning air arose ;

But there sounded forth no battle cry,

To mark their eager close ;

With teeth hard set and flashing eye,

They met—the mortal foes.

For a little space, the whirling dust
Hid the fair light of day,
But, as the breeze grew stronger,
It swept the mist away ;
And Decius turn'd, from where he fought,
To mark how went the fray.
The foe had borne his legions back
Three spears' length on the field ;
Even while he gazed, the second rank
Of the Hastats 'gan to yield :
Vainly, to stem the ebbing war,
Tribune, centurion, consular,
With voice and gesture, tried,
And the flower of ancient Houses
In the van of battle died ;
File by file, and rank by rank,
They went down, side by side.
So fared the Left—their litui,
That lately swelled so cheerily,
Rang fitfully and wearily,
With a sound like a dying moan ;
But on the Right, tho' hard beste'd,

The Roman yet makes gallant head,
And Manlius holds his own.

Then Decius staid no longer :
He saw the Pontiff ride,
Helmless tho' harmless, thro' the darts,
And called him to his side :

“Hither, in haste, Valerius
Thou seest mine hour is come ;
Do thou, as 'fits thine office,
Rehearse the words of doom.
Comrades ! for your old leader's sake,
To the death, this once, fight on :
The curse that hitherto hath lain
On your hearts and arms, like a leaden chain,
Will be lightened when I'm gone ;
And, if ye'd lay mine ashes
Where my Fathers sleep in Rome,
Come, seek me in yon serried files,
And charge the Latin home !”

Then reverently, with steady voice,
He spoke the words of fear ;
His cloak wrapt close around his face,
His bare foot on a spear :—

“ Sire of our Founder ! hearken ;
And ye, mysterious Powers,
Indigetes, Novensiles,
Whom earth revered as deities
In the childhood of the Hours ;
And ye, too, who the shadowy tribes
Of the pale Manes sway,
To whom, at dead of moonless nights,
The coal-black steer we slay,
Who, in the leaden twilight, dwell
Where ninefold Styx, with ambient swell,
Girdles the burning marl of Hell—
List all—the while I pray :
To you, in meet libation,
I shed this blood of mine,
As priests, before the sacrifice,
Pour out Falernian wine ;

Now turn the channel of your wrath ;
From Rome avert the blow :
But let it fall the heavier
On me and on the foe ;
And grant that myriads of their dead
May follow where I go ! ”

He spake, and, as he ended,
Gave his charger spur and rein ;
With his first bound, the Apulian clear'd
Three fathoms' length of plain ;
The Latin cower'd before him,
Like sheep within their fold,
When the wolf of Apennine comes down
From his lair upon the wold ;
While, even Lucius Annius
For an instant held his breath :
All guess'd with what intent he came—
The Messenger of Death.
But the thought of his dead brother
Hath waked the Latin's wrath ;
So, with set teeth and writhen brow,

Hé barr'd the Consul's path :
'Twas a meeting, as of thunder-clouds,
When they 'counter'd, breast to breast ;
But tho' his thrust sped fiercely home,
Before the deffest lance in Rome,
Down went the Prætor's crest !
Strong and unscathed, his slayer
Rode onward in his pride ;
The foe, still yielding lightsome room,
Roll'd back on either side ;
So, cleft by swift Liburnian prows,
Grey Ocean's waves divide.
But, as the billows silently
Close 'neath the flying stern,
Their ranks, uniting as he past,
Barr'd rescue or return ;
Yet, onward bore the Consul,
Till he had clov'n his way,
To where The Cities' standard
Look'd down upon the fray.
Then thicken'd all around him,
The tumult and the stour,

Till eager eyes, that track'd his course,
 Could follow it no more ;
But, where the swarm was darkest,
 They heard a piercing cry—
The scream of his Apulian steed
 In the death agony—
And that one crest, that topp'd the rest,
 Sank downward suddenly.
Still sharper rained the hail of steel
 On his uncover'd head :
His arm grows faint with slaughter now,
 And grasps a broken blade :
A score of spears, thro' gaping wounds,
 For the struggling soul gave way,
One shiver of the mighty limbs,—
 And the strong heart was clay.

Then a shout burst from a thousand breasts,
 As tho' some spell were broken,
Shrill with the trace of recent fright,
Like the cry of sleepers, at dead of night,
 From hideous dreams awoken.

It was answer'd by a growl of wrath,
From the heaving ranks of Rome,
Such murmur, ominous and deep,
Preludes the storm, that soon will sweep,
'Cross Hadria's seething foam :
With a crash, as when that whirlwind bursts,
Rome's knights are spurring on ;
Torquatus leads their flashing lines,
While, in his gripe, the broadsword shines,
That the proud Agnomen won ;
The blade, beneath whose griding sweep,
The fair-hair'd Giant fell,
Never before this fateful hour,
Hath wrought its work so well.
Tireless, resistless, pitiless,
He clears his desp'rate way,
And, where the torquis on his crest
Gleams, starlike, thro' the fray,
Six times three hundred horsemen
Are following as they may ;
While, thro' the scatter'd maniples
With spirit fresh and high,

They come to turn the tide of fight,
Rome's proved Triarii.
Then swell'd, tenfold more furious,
The gath'ring battle's roar,
Like the moan of many prison'd waves,
Whose dungeons are the sunless caves
That skirt Illyria's shore ;
And, in after song and story,
Were the victors wont to tell,
How those they vanquish'd, to the last,
Fought stubbornly and well.
But the nameless horror of a curse
On the shrinking Latin press'd ;
The Roman, mad for vengeance, fought,
Like fiends, or men possess'd :
Little could warlike stratagem,
Or trick of fence avail,
For, when they found, with changing blows,
Pilum and broadsword fail,
They grappled at their foemen's throat,
And rent them, tooth and nail.
Hast seen the pinewoods bending,

That the ridge of Gaurus crown,
When, from the hold of Æolus,
Euroclydon comes down?—
When heavy rains of spring-time,
And tides of melting snow
Bring down, in flood, five fathom deep,
The tawny waves of Po,
Hast seen the reed-beds yielding
That skirt the river's flow?—
So, bent before their onset,
The centre of the foe.
Five times the line was broken,
Five times the strife renew'd,
And not a foot of ground was won
But paid its price of blood;
But, while the vanguard struggled,
And hardly held their own,
Rome's horse, thro' their unguarded flank,
With a furious charge, bore down:
And, as thro' broken bank or weir
Gushes the swollen linn,
Torquatus and his riders,

Thro' the gap, came slaughtering in ;
There was one baffled rally,
The last of their despair,
And the Latin broke, and turn'd, and fled,
Leaving their noblest there.
Once, where the pass grew narrow,
The fliers stood at bay,
But the Roman press'd them fierce and fast,
As the pack that scents its prey.
For, where the footmen might not pierce,
The horsemen hew'd their way.
And, louder than the storm of steel,
One voice was heard and known,
As the Consul, wild with the lust of blood,
Hounded his legions on :—

“ Comrades ! have ye forgotten,
Whose blood for you was shed ?
Before you stands the foeman,—
Behind you lie the dead :
Each Latin that outlives to-day,
On your honour is a stain ;

Do ye linger ? dare ye falter ?
Hath Decius died in vain ?
Where Styx repels the unaneal'd,
He roams the hither coast,
'Twill need a royal hecatomb
To soothe that sullen ghost ;
And whoso to the vanquish'd,
Shall ruth or mercy show,
By Pluto ! I will strike him dead,
As I would my mortal foe ! ”

But their own thoughts bore a sharper sting
Than taunt or threat'ning word,
None stay'd his hand from vengeance,
While it could lift a sword.
Vain was the shriek for mercy,
In the name of friendships old—
The Present blotted out the Past—
And vain the proffer'd gold :
Not one had bought his forfeit life
With the ransom ten times told.

At early dawn, the fight began,
And, all that summer's day,
There was carnage in the troubled heart
Of the mountain-ranges grey ;
The runnels of the blue hill-streams
Were stain'd with curdling red ;
Each nook of all those quiet dells
Held its own heap of dead.
Nor ever ceased the slaughter,
Till the night began to fall,
And the sullen note of the litui
Sounded a late recall.

The moon is high on Vesperis—
O lonely mountain-river !
How ghastly, in the doubtful light,
Thy tainted waters quiver.
No marvel, if they curl and shrink,
The waves of the Lower Sea,
Meeting the load of swollen dead
To-night hath laid on thee.

The moon is low on Vesperis—
 On water, marsh, and plain,
The torches gleam of those that seek
 The self-devoted slain.
A fruitless quest, tho' it began
 With earliest shades of night,
So thickly lie the relics
 Of the long mortal fight.
It was at that chill and dreary hour
 That heraldeth the day,
When the darkness deepens blacker,
 Just ere it turns to grey,
That they came where The Cities' standard
 But yester-morn had stood ;
And the red lights glint smoothly back
 From a spreading pool of blood.
There *He* lay,—the dead his pillow,
 By the dead, too, overlaid ;
His left hand griped a Latin's throat,—
 His right, a shiver'd blade—
Ev'n as a reaper resteth,
 Weary with toil and drought,

By the brown swarths embosom'd,
That his own hand hath wrought.
'Twas not so much the ghastly face
That met the torches' glare,
As the thrill at all their hearts, that told
The search was ended there.
The awe that fell on the searchers all
Was a strange sight to see,
As they straighten'd ev'ry writhen limb
Gently and tenderly ;
Their rough hands smooth'd his tangled hair,
With gore and dust defiled,
Softly, as watching mothers stroke
The locks of a sleeping child ;
Then they laid his head, where it loved to rest,
In the hollow of his shield,
And the grey dawn's first struggling rays
Lighted upon the rigid face,
As they bare him from the field.

THE FUNERAL.

STILLY above the Seven-hill'd Town
 Broodeth a sultry noon,
Pillar and cornice shimmer white
 In the glowing smile of June.
'Twas but yestreen,—the sky was dark
 With thunder-clouds and rain,—
When Manlius, up the Sacred Road,
 Pass'd with triumphal train;
There was a gloom, too, on the faces
 Of the dumb and sullen crowd,
And the comrades of his murder'd son
 Forbore not curses loud :
Never hath Roman festal
 Boasted so scant display ;
There are more to swell the triumph
 That the Dead must lead to-day.
Manhood, and age, and childhood,
 From far and near have come,
None, save their Household Gods, are left
 To guard the hearths of Rome.

With heads bent low, his kinsmen go
 Behind him, one by one ;
Before, they bear the linnings
 Of the deeds that he hath done,
With trophies gay and numberless
 Of the battles he hath won :
The civic and the mural crown
 They bind around his brow,
And sadly suit the sere oak-leaves
 With the wither'd cheek below.
When the breeze unfolds the sagum,
 And bares his breast to view,
Lo ! where the ancient gashes
 Are mingling with the new ;
They are plain to read, those records
 Of what for Rome he bore :
With twice ten wounds the corse is mark'd,
 And every wound before.
So, ever as the train pass'd on,
 Green laurel-leaves and flowers
From window, door, and house-top,
 On the bier came down in showers :

But onward, still, wound slowly
The long array of cars,
Till their steps they stayed, where the pyre was laid,
In the great Field of Mars.

The while, Volumnia spake no word,
Nor sob, nor breath, her vesture stirr'd,
She stood some space apart,
Rigid as marble master-piece
Of Attic graver's art ;
Out spoke Cæcina's haughty wife—
Of the Claudian blood she came,
While others marvell'd silently,
She only dar'd to blame :—

“Now by the great Matuta,
I hold it sin and shame,
That, while there's grief at all our hearts,
And tears in ev'ry eye,
The mother of the dead should stand
Tearless and careless by.”

Slow was the hand, and never shook,
That raised the mourner's veil ;
The thousand eyes that met her gaze,
Of ruth, or weakness, found no trace ;
Tho' seldom sure hath living face
Been seen so deathly pale ;
Her oldest friends knew not her voice,
So alter'd it had grown,—
Words cannot tell the dreariness
Of the shrill, uncertain tone,
Most like the wail of winds, at night,
Thro' clefts of mouldering stone :—

“There's iron in *our* blood, men say,
Who boast the Sergian line,
Rome's Annals knew it long before
The Exile founded thine :
We keep the She-wolf's nature yet,
And, when the toils are round us set,
Die without howl or whine.
I tell thee this,—when Decius writhed
In the agony of death,

He felt no sharper pang than mine,
When my travail gave him breath.
Speak out, I charge thee, Claudia !
Wast thou not standing by ?
Did all the pains that rent me then,
Force from my breast one cry ?
Albeit mine eyes in torture burn'd,
They would not shed a tear,
When Heaven had listen'd to our vows,
And given our House an heir.
But, when Lucina would have claim'd
The groans she holds her due,
I clench'd my hands, till the blood sprung out,
And bit my closed lips through.
Now in this sharper trial,
It shall be even so ;
No pomp of noisy grief from me
Shall grace your funeral show.
How I lov'd him, how I mourn him,
The great Gods know and see ;
But the tale of my heart's bitterness
Is not for such as ye."

Her fierce glance challenged a reply,
But answer came there none ;
As from some ghastly shape that walks
Thro' grave-yards dark and lone,
The crowd shrank backward from her path,
Spell-bound till she was gone.

Then, as the rite demanded,
With head averted came
The Gentile that was next of blood,
And to the pile set flame ;
The Veterans cast their offerings,
As they circled round the pyre,
Garlands of bays, incense, and arms,
With store of rich attire,
And gems that flash'd with a changeful light,
In the heart of the rising fire :
Its hot breath, for an instant, fann'd
The loose locks of the Dead,
And a crimson tinge, of life-like hue,
On the livid cheek was shed :
Then rising quick and hungrily,

With a rustle and a roar,
The Fire-God, wolf-like, clutch'd his prey—
The mourners looked no more.
The funeral chorus yet remain'd
Before the rites were done,
It rose upon the summer air
In solemn monotone,
And double flutes chimed in the while
With deep diapasón.

“Dost hear us, parted Spirit,
Or comes our dirge too late?
For, sounds of earth but faintly pass
Elysium's ivory gate.
Ev'n now, with kindly greeting,
They gather to thy side,
The train of ancient worthies,
Who, for Rome, have lived and died;
They lead thee where, from life's long toil,
Their weary limbs rest well,
Where soft winds breathe eternal spring,
And silvery fountains swell

With a musical murmur o'er golden sands,
In the meadows of asphodel.
Yet Latin maids and widows
For their dead the moan prolong,
Our pride shall check the starting tears
That do thy glories wrong,
And with our nœnia mingle
Clear notes of Pæan-song.
Not only in an hour like this
Would we remember thee ;
But, in revel and in battle-field,
We'll guard thy memory ;
When we meet our foemen face to face,
'Twill stir our blood to flame,
And, 'twixt the wine-cup and the lip,
Shall rise thine honour'd name,
While we pour a deep libation
To the Tutelars of Rome ;
And another to the Fateful Three
Who days so glorious wove for thee,
Tho' they call'd thee early home.
Yet, once more, let the double-flutes

A deeper cadence breathe,
Till the dead of thrice three thousand years
Start from their rest beneath.
O Thou! whose praise, yet more than ours,
The coming age shall tell—
Strong arm, brave heart, and subtle brain—
Receive our last farewell!"

THE END.

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